

RUN

Kody Keplinger

Scholastic Press/New York

Copyright © 2016 by Kody Keplinger

All rights reserved. Published by Scholastic Press, an imprint of Scholastic Inc., *Publishers since 1920*. SCHOLASTIC, SCHOLASTIC PRESS, and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.

The publisher does not have any control over and does not assume any responsibility for author or third-party websites or their content.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher.

For information regarding permission, write to Scholastic Inc., Attention: Permissions Department, 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015048824

ISBN 978-0-545-83113-0

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

16 17 18 19 20

Printed in the U.S.A. 23

First edition, July 2016

Book design by Mary Claire Cruz and Elizabeth B. Parisi

Hand lettering by Ellen Duda

BO

I'm waiting for the sirens.

I know it don't make much sense. The police ain't coming for me—not yet, anyway—but I already feel like a fugitive.

My flip-flops slap against the muddy ground, and soggy leaves cling to my bare legs. Tree limbs catch and tangle and snap in my hair. I should've put it up before I left. But I'd barely had time to pack, let alone think about my damn hair.

“Slow down, stupid dog.” Utah's leash cuts into my fingers. She's running faster than I can, her tail swishing back and forth, like this is some kinda game.

By the time we reach the edge of the woods, I'm panting harder than the dog is. My chest hurts and my lungs feel like they're screaming for air, but I ain't got time to catch my breath.

She's waiting for me, standing there behind her parents' garage. In the moonlight, she looks like some sorta ghost. Her skin is so white it seems to glow, and her long black hair is darker than the night around her. She looks beautiful, and I look feral. Not that she can see me or anything else right now.

“Agnes,” I whisper so as not to scare her. My voice is ragged. I swallow and say her name again. “Agnes.”

“Bo?”

“Right here.”

I’m about to reach out for her when Utah decides she’s got first dibs. Agnes squeals, startled, as my dog jumps up and licks her right on the nose.

“Shh!” I yank Utah back, and Agnes covers her mouth.

Neither of us move for a minute. We stand, frozen, listening. But the only sounds are the crickets and a few loudmouthed bullfrogs down by the Putnams’ pond.

Slowly, Agnes lowers her hand. “You brought the dog? Really, Bo?”

“Sure as hell ain’t gonna leave her,” I say. “Did you get the keys?”

She nods and reaches into the front pocket of her jeans. She holds them out about a foot to my left. I don’t say nothing, though. I take a quick step to the side and wrap my hand around two cold keys, their jagged edges digging into my palm.

“Come on.” I take her arm and loop it through mine, then guide her around the side of the detached garage. Utah trots along on my left, while Agnes’s cane makes quiet thuds in the grass to my right. “Which key?” I ask when we get to the side door.

“Neither. They never lock the garage.”

“They’re crazy.”

“Nothing’s been stolen before.”

“Until now.”

“I’m not sure this counts as stealing.”

But I’m pretty damn sure it does.

I turn the knob and push open the door. Agnes lets go of my arm and slides her hand along the wall until she finds the light switch. A fluorescent light flickers on above us, revealing two cars parked side by side. One is the Atwoods’ regular car, a white Toyota. But the other is an old silver Chevy I ain’t seen before.

“My sister’s car,” Agnes says, like she’s reading my mind. “She’s still at college, so nobody’s using it.”

“Won’t she be home for summer soon, though?”

Agnes shrugs. “We need it more than she does.”

I can’t argue with that. Agnes and I toss our stuff in the back. Neither of our bags are heavy. We just packed what we absolutely needed. “Hop in, Utah,” I say, patting the back-seat. She climbs in and licks the side of my face before I shut the door.

Agnes gets into the passenger’s seat, and I run to turn off the garage light before I slide behind the wheel. Above my head, attached to the visor, is an automatic garage door opener.

“Will your parents hear?”

“No,” Agnes says. “They sleep like rocks.”

My heart is pounding and my hands are slick with sweat as I shove one of the keys into the ignition. It takes me a few tries to get it to turn over, and the revving is so loud it makes me flinch. Her parents had better sleep like the dead, or else we

ain't even getting out of the driveway. The clock on the dashboard lights up and tells me it's just past 3:00 a.m.

"Agnes," I say, choking on her name. "You sure you wanna do this?"

"No." She turns her head, and this time she's looking right at me. "But I'm doing it anyway."

I almost start to cry, right then and there, but I blink back the tears. My fingers fumble with the garage door opener, and a second later the groaning and creaking starts. I watch the gap between the door and ground get wider and wider. It's been open a good minute before I shift the car into gear, and Agnes's hand reaches out to cover mine.

"Love you, Bo," she says.

"Love you, too."